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GIVEN BY

Edward J. Parker







BOSTON COMMON.

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PAPER

READ BY

EDWARD J. PARKER,

President Quincy Boulevard and Park Association,  
Quincy, Illinois,

AT THE

Annual Meeting of the American Park and  
Outdoor Art Association,

HELD IN

DETROIT, MICHIGAN,

ON

JUNE 27, 28, 29, 1899.

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Edward J. Parker,  
Mar. 20, 1900.

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# BOSTON COMMON.

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President Quincy Boulevard and Park Association,  
QUINCY, ILLINOIS.

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With the Spanish occupation of the western hemisphere the European idea of the open and central plaza as a public meeting place was introduced into the West Indies, Mexico and South America; and in those tropical and semi-tropical climates the people to-day frequently gather in the plaza to listen to the music of well trained orchestras supported by the state.

Later on, with the settlements in a colder and severer climate, the foundation and existence of the school, the church and public meeting house, were paramount considerations to the cavalier, the Puritan and the French Canadian, and public pleasure grounds were, for a time, forgotten.

As late as 1855 Boston Common was the only park in the United States. A few cities, to be sure, had reserved small squares for public uses, but we had no other parks. In the past forty-four years other cities have followed the example of Boston by establishing park systems, which have since been largely developed; and, recently, the officers of this association have been thinking of recommending the appointment by the government of a special agent to bring together statistics of public parks and other recreation grounds in the United States. The form of the proposed resolution is as follows:

"Resolved—We therefore petition for the appointment of a special agent by the Census Bureau with authority and means to examine parks and recreation grounds, and prepare accurate and complete statistics and information regarding them; said statistics and information to be published in connection with the next census."

If the appointment should be made by the government, most interesting information will be gathered relative to the number, acreage and value of our national and state reservations, public parks and squares, and municipal pleasure grounds.

While much has been accomplished by some cities and states, and the government has made large reservations of public land for park purposes and national cemeteries, yet this body of well trained men is urging and looking hopefully into the future for still greater development of parks, to be laid out upon more artistic and scientific lines.

I am expected to speak, however, only of the inception of park work; looking back to the days of the colonists, rather than to speak of such pleasure grounds as we now have, or what we look forward to in our country in the increase of national and state reservations and larger municipal holdings.

### BOSTON COMMON.

Looking backward and speaking of Boston Common recalls to a New England man many interesting incidents in the life and growth of this nation. First, the disappearance from its slopes of the wigwam and aboriginal inhabitant; the colonial settlement and the colonists' "lowing herds as they wound slowly o'er the lea." After the shot fired at Lexington (which was "heard round the world") he sees, under the inspiration of fife and drum, the sturdy colonists gathering on the Common for drill, to measure strength with the king's troops. A little later, General Washington stands under the spreading branches of the "Old Elm" and reviews the continental army. Still later, when independence has been achieved, and Boston has become a large city, there gather again on Boston Common many companies of soldiers and sailors to listen to the patriotic utterances of the eloquent sons of Massachusetts, who bid them God-speed as they go forth to battle in Mexico, to the war of the Rebellion, and more recently to distant seas and the far away islands of the West Indies and the Philippines. †

I will now quote some interesting details which I have selected mainly from "Topographical and Historical Description of Boston," by N. B. Shurtleff.

"Perhaps there is no part of Boston in which its citizens feel more pride than in its Common. This tract of about forty-five acres has, from the early days of the town, been the free and undisputed property of its inhabitants. Many persons have supposed that it was given to the town, but this is not true, for it was purchased of Mr. William Blaxton, who was seated upon the peninsula when the colonists came to Massachusetts, and who so generously invited them to his hospitable abode, where so bountifully flowed the purest water from his living spring. For about four years after the removal of the colonists to Boston they dwelt contentedly with their host, and in the year 1634 the











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